



# WASHOE COUNTY

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## STAFF REPORT

**BOARD MEETING DATE:** February 26, 2013

**DATE:** February 9, 2013

**TO:** Board of County Commissioners

**FROM:** Charles A. Moore, Fire Chief Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District  
Phone: 775.328.6123 Email: [cmoore@tmfpd.us](mailto:cmoore@tmfpd.us)

**THROUGH:** Katy Simon, County Manager

**SUBJECT:** Discussion and possible direction to staff to implement a process to determine the level of participation of other cooperating agencies and solicit citizen members for a Blue Ribbon Committee, whose charge will be to review and analyze regional fire service and prepare a comprehensive report to the Board of County Commissioners and other cooperating agencies.

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### SUMMARY

The Board of County Commissioners directed staff to prepare a process and timeline to convene a Blue Ribbon Citizens Committee to study regional fire issues within Washoe County and prepare a scope of work document to frame the work the committee will be charged to complete.

To make possible an aggressive schedule it is proposed to discuss participation with other possible cooperating agencies and determine their interest by the end of February 2013. If participation of other cooperating agencies is secured, a collaborative selection of Blue Ribbon Committee members would commence. If no other cooperating agencies wish to participate, the Board of County Commissioners may elect to move forward independently on a similar timeline. The Blue Ribbon Committee will require guidance for the study and a proposed scope of work document is attached (*Attachment one*).

The scope of work document suggests parameters of the Committee's work and provides the Board and cooperating agencies with a starting point for discussion of the desired outcomes of the Committee's efforts. The initial entities invited to discuss the work are the City of Reno, the City of Sparks, Truckee Meadows/Sierra Fire Protection District and North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District - for the reason these are the entities that collect and expend taxes for the purpose of fire protection. Other fire agencies that may be considered include the Reno-Tahoe Airport Authority, community specific volunteer

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fire departments, tribal fire departments, Nevada Division of Forestry and federal fire agencies.

An independent facilitator will need to be retained. The facilitator will need to be neutral and technically knowledgeable about fire and emergency response systems with experience in preparing or facilitating similar studies.

**Washoe County Strategic Objective supported by this item:** *Safe, Secure and Healthy Communities*

**Strategic Outcome supported by this item:** *Improve Fire Safety*

### **PREVIOUS ACTION**

On January 22, 2013 the Board of County Commissioners discussed formation of a Citizens' Blue Ribbon Committee on Regional Fire and Emergency Response (Agenda Item 9) and directed staff to implement the process.

### **BACKGROUND**

The region's fire protection and emergency response has historically been provided by as many as five (5) local government agencies, seventeen (17) volunteer community specific departments, federal and state agencies. It could be argued that many autonomous agencies with authority for fire protection require more coordination, thereby limiting efficiency. The communities within Washoe County have expanded significantly over time - both in land area and population - to a point that boundaries that were once easily identifiable have blended together into sometimes inefficient service territories that can impact cost, response times and service levels. In other jurisdictions, technological and/or political solutions that see no jurisdictional boundary have been implemented with success. These solutions include closest unit dispatching using automatic vehicle locators, centralized dispatching and joint powers authorities. The region has potential for incidents that can easily overrun and overwhelm the sole responding agency. It seems obvious that a finding a balance between the cost to provide resources and the duty to protect citizens and the community from risks is no longer an issue that can be discounted.

Financial exigencies and competition for resources from other deserving public service functions dictate that we apply resources for fire and emergency response in the most efficient, responsive and highest quality manner. Convening a Blue Ribbon Committee seeks to bring together a group of significant citizens tasked to study the issues from a non-partisan perspective.

It is intended that selection of the Blue Ribbon Committee members and its facilitator be collaborative and representative of the community, its geography and its interests. Committee members are proposed to be non-partisan and independent of government.

A possible process plan is presented below and a possible scope of work is attached as Attachment one.

Committee members are proposed to be solicited by either nomination or by application. Each cooperating agency could select two to three members for a proposed total committee of 12 to 14 members.

The Board and cooperating agencies would select the facilitator through an RFP process.

**Process Plan and Timeline**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Benchmark / Date</b>
<b>1</b> Determine the level of participation from other regional government	29-Feb
Presentation to City of Sparks	25-Feb
City of Reno	TBD
North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District	TBD
Other cooperating agencies	TBD
<b>2</b> Formulate a strategy to nominate or recruit applicants for the Blue Ribbon Commission	25-Feb to 1-Mar
Media and twitter release will link to the Washoe County web portal feature page and record the nominations and applications.	
The BCC and possible partners review the applicants and nominate	
Committee meets and develops schedule	
<b>3</b> Select Facilitator	8- Mar
Identify short list of facilitators	
Develop and circulate RFP	
Evaluate and select	
<b>4</b> Define the Scope of Work	15-Mar
Finalize scope of work to the Blue Ribbon Committee	
Meeting dates established	15-Mar
Preliminary Report	10-May

**FISCAL IMPACT**

This project was not included in the FY 13-14 budget. If the Board of County Commissioners approves moving forward, staff will come back to the BCC and BoFC with a proposal for funding from contingency from both the County and TMFPD.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the Board direct its staff to implement a process to determine the level of participation of other cooperating agencies and solicit citizen members for a Blue Ribbon Committee, whose charge will be to review and analyze regional fire service and prepare a comprehensive report to the Board of County Commissioners and other cooperating agencies.

**POSSIBLE MOTION**

Should the Board agree with staff's recommendation a possible motion would be:

*"I move to direct staff to implement a process to determine the level of participating with other cooperating agencies and solicit citizen members for a Blue Ribbon Committee, whose charge will be to review and analyze regional fire service and prepare a comprehensive report to the Board of County Commissioners and other cooperating agencies."*

*Attachment One***Blue Ribbon Committee for Review and Analysis of Fire Services in the Region**

**Charge: Review and analyze regional fire service and prepare a comprehensive report to the Board of County Commissioners and other cooperating agencies.**

The entire area known as Washoe County is home to almost a half million residents who inhabit \$12 billion of taxable structural value and three million acres of open space for recreation. It relies on the Truckee River, the Sierra Snow Pack, and the region's pleasant climate as natural resources to sustain life. It also relies on critical infrastructure such as freeways, highways, railways, airports, power plants, and utility transmission lines to support its economy and its tax base. This place we call home is filled with peace, beauty, and happiness intermixed with risks, mishaps and disasters. To maintain a comfortable balance, the people of Washoe County rely heavily on public safety services dedicated to respond quickly to disasters and daily emergency incidents, assigned with the mission to protect life and property from further harm and destruction. One such service is fire protection.

It could be argued that many autonomous agencies with authority for fire protection require more coordination, thereby limiting efficiency. Communities within Washoe County have expanded significantly over time - both in land area and population - to a point that boundaries that were once easily identifiable have blended together into sometimes inefficient service territories that can impact cost, response times and service levels. Over time technological and/or political solutions that see no jurisdictional boundary have been implemented with success in other jurisdictions. The region has potential for incidents that can easily overrun and overwhelm the sole responding agency. It seems obvious that finding a balance between the cost to provide resources and the duty to protect citizens and the community from risks is no longer an issue that can be discounted.

Financial exigencies and competition for resources from other deserving public service functions dictate that we apply resources for fire and emergency response in the most efficient, responsive and highest quality manner. Convening a Blue Ribbon Committee seeks to bring together a group of significant citizens tasked to study the issues from a non-partisan perspective.

It is intended that selection of the Blue Ribbon Committee members and its facilitator be collaborative and representative of the community, its geography and its interests. Committee members should be non-partisan and independent of government.

The communities within Washoe County have expanded significantly over time--both in land area and population--to a point that boundaries that were once easily identifiable have blended together into a uniform design that has no concept of distinction except that of architecture. As the world and the risks herein have also changed so has the historical mission of the fire service. Once tasked only with applying water to a burning building the fire service has developed into an all-risk provider of services that have been called upon to any emergency the public sees fit. Its tradition of being a strong and integral part of the community, able to respond in force within minutes, and having the tools and knowledge that no other agency may have to manage such emergencies, have made it a reliable and immediate "go-to" for small and large disasters alike. With proper direction from the community, fire service leaders within the area can answer the expanded needs and desires of the community, and properly respond to the risks that we see now and foresee in our future.

We are convening a Blue Ribbon Committee to study and establish findings regarding existing and possible new service models that can provide a flexible but permanent plan for managing fire services within Washoe County at a regional level. These services would be able to plan for, educate to prevent such, and respond to everyday and large scale emergencies regardless of jurisdictional boundaries for willing partners. This committee should be comprised of informed individuals capable of researching historical and present data, evaluating existing and other common or unique methods of service delivery based on agreed-upon standards and criteria and be able to communicate findings that are relevant and material to the provision of continuously improved fire protection and emergency response services within Washoe County.

The Committee, with the assistance of a professional facilitator is charged to:

1. Review current and historical data, seek new information, and discuss options with regards to:
  - a. Response times, service levels, and current and expected costs for each field
  - b. Provide research of best practices and high quality - cost effective fire and emergency response models
  - c. Review any existing or potential labor issues with existing labor agreements and NRS 288
  - d. Review of regional fire/emergency response governance models
  - e. Review of any existing or potential legal issues, including any recommended changes to statute, code, and policies
  - f. Review governance options
  - g. Review the current or expanded role of such services provided by fire service agencies such as:

- i. Fire suppression, prevention, education, community relations
    - ii. EMS, Community health service involvement (education, chain of survival)
    - iii. Hazardous materials response
    - iv. Tactical Response with Law Enforcement
    - v. Technical Rescue Response (i.e. Water, Ice, High-Angle, Confined Space, Jurisdictional/Cooperation Issues with WCSO Search and Rescue)
    - vi. Aircraft Resources and Response
    - vii. Heavy Equipment Support (Dozers, Cranes, Large Scale Recovery Vehicles)
    - viii. Aid to and from Federal Agencies and Installations
    - ix. Long Term/Large Scale Disaster Preparedness
  - h. Review the current or expanded role of a variety of Aid Agreements
2. Prepare a comprehensive written report that assesses the current systems and identifies opportunities and challenges for improvements, effectiveness, efficiency and innovation.
  3. Prepare and present findings to members of the public, elected leaders, and local fire service managers in an audio and visual supported presentation that is easy to understand to both the technologically educated professional and the lay-person.
  4. Invite and involve participation from stakeholders including fire service professionals, volunteers and leaders, labor, and elected officials including those that are innovative and in touch with the latest and most advanced trends within the fire service. Participation by any and all agencies or representatives should be voluntary but encouraged. It should also be emphasized that any member, representative, or agency who participates in the fact finding process shall not be expected to commit to the plan as described in the written or presentation findings report.
  5. Convene as soon as possible, establish an aggressive meeting schedule, and provide a preliminary report of findings to the Washoe County Commission, Cities of Reno and Sparks, the regional fire districts and other cooperating agencies within two months of their first meeting.